

422 THE BALLAD OF READING GAOL

Out into God's sweet air we went.
But not in wonted way,
For this man's face was white with
fear,
And that man's face was grey,
And I never saw sad men who
looked
So wistfully at the day.

I never saw sad men who looked
With such a wistful eye
Upon that little tent of blue
We prisoners called the sky,
And at every careless cloud that
passed
In happy freedom by.

But there were those amongst us all
Who walked with downcast head.,
And knew that, had each got his
due,
They should have died instead:
He had but killed a thing that lived,
Whilst they had killed the dead.

For he who sins a second time
Wakes a dead soul to pain,
And draws it from its spotted
shroud.
And makes it bleed again,
And makes it bleed great gouts of
blood,
And makes it bleed in vain!

Like ape or clown, in monstrous
garb
With crooked arrows starred,
Silently we went round and round
The slippery asphalt yard;
Silently we went round and round,
And no man spoke a word.

Silently we went round and round,
And through each hollow mind
The Memory of dreadful things
Rushed like a dreadful wind,
And Horror stalked before each
man,
And Terror crept behind.

The Warders strutted up and down,
And kept their herd of brutes,